

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Thursday, January 21, 2010, 7 p.m.

ARC, 1701 W. Ash

MINUTES

Commission Present: Terry Kloepfel, Marin Blevins, Bill Pauls, Dan Devine, Gary Kespohl, Sue Davis, Meredith Donaldson

Commission Absent: None

Staff Present: Mike Hood, Mike Griggs, Erika Coffman, Tammy Miller

Kloepfel called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Agenda: The agenda was approved on a motion by Devine, seconded by Pauls.

Minutes: The minutes were approved on a motion by Pauls, seconded by Kespohl.

Monthly Report: The Commission considered monthly reports from November and December.

Kloepfel asked about an item on the Ranger's December report regarding demonstrators?

Griggs said the demonstrators were from the Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas who were protesting at vigils held at the ARC and Rock Bridge H.S. for Karen Kahler and her daughters.

Ranger Arens kept the group at a reasonable distance from those attending the vigils.

Pauls said he had talked to Arens about interns and the problem of many of them wanting to be paid, instead of just gaining work experience. He asked if staff had any solutions?

Hood said that with many student requests for internships, the department's policy is that if there is a vacant position, then an intern can be hired for it and paid. However, if a position is created for an intern, that intern works on a volunteer basis. The department is finding that an increasing number of students do want to be paid.

Griggs added that the Ranger program is a challenging one, because in some cases, dealing with the public in difficult situations is not something an unpaid intern wants to deal with.

Pauls asked about collaborating with the police department and using them more frequently?

Griggs answered that Arens is law enforcement and an intern with training must come through the police dept.

Coffman said police are used at the ARC, Albert-Oakland Family Aquatic Center in the summer, and at some recreation events such as Moonlight Hoops. They are paid overtime, since they are city employees.

Donaldson asked how volunteers were used?

Griggs said the Park Patrol is very helpful, particularly on trails and helping with traffic in the parks on busy days.

The November and December monthly reports were approved on a motion by Devine, seconded by Pauls.

Rezoning – Conley Road

Hood reminded the Commission they had considered this rezoning request at their November meeting, however, before staff submitted their recommendation, the request was withdrawn and a new request submitted.

Griggs reviewed the new rezoning request, which is now planned zoning instead of C3. He showed maps of the area which have not changed. The new zoning means that all development in the affected tract must be approved by City Council. He pointed out the developer is using a Transportation Development District (TDD). Trail improvements can be made under the TDD.

Kespohl asked about the map and whether a steep grade would impact trail construction?

Griggs replied that planning staff had walked the area and believe it is possible to build the trail there, though it will be a challenge.

Donaldson commented that using the TDD to fund the trail would be a benefit.

The Commission on a motion by Devine, seconded by Kespohl, agreed to inform the Council that they that they do not foresee any adverse impacts to Stephens Lake Park as long as adequate stormwater controls are implemented. In addition, the Commission believes that it is essential that the developer work with the City regarding the future extension of Hinkson Creek Trail, and that the possibility is explored of Transportation Development District (TDD) funds being used to construct the portion of the trail located within the TDD.

Motion approved 7-0.

Council Questionnaire

Kloeppele told the Commission he had received a questionnaire from the City Clerk's office to complete for the Council. Each Commissioner received a copy in their meeting packets. The forms are similar to ones the Commission has completed in the past. Kloeppele asked that the Commission review it before the Feb. 18 meeting, and they would complete it collectively at that time. Kloeppele will compile the answers and submit it by the Feb. 26 deadline.

Park Naming Report

Hood said the issue that arose over a year ago of the official name of Albert-Oakland Park spurred discussion on park names. Council asked staff to compile a list of parks that are officially named. This process took several months, as the information is not easy to find. The City Clerk assisted with searching city ordinances and resolutions.

Staff took findings back to Council in a report which breaks park names into four categories: those with names clearly established by ordinance, motion or resolution; parks with official names that staff can confirm was established without Council action; parks that have never been officially named; and parks that staff has not been able to determine whether an official Council naming action occurred or not. The last category consists of 36 parks and second category consists of 5 parks.

Hood said staff recommended to Council that instead of further researching all of those 41 parks, that Council name the parks as they are in an official action, as there is no known controversy over those 41 parks. Council had agreed to that action.

Council did refer three parks to the Commission for naming that fit into the third category: parks that have never been named. Those are Bonnie View, which Commission took action on at their November meeting; the Ash and Clinkscapes property, site of the ARC; and the Smith property on Waco Road. The Smith property owner has naming rights, so the only one to really be considered is Ash and Clinkscapes.

Hood commented that the Ash and Clinkscapes property was donated by the Shy family, and they did not have interest in naming the site. He said staff may need to touch base with them before proceeding.

Donaldson asked how staff would prefer to proceed on the names?

Hood said if the Shys still do not want naming rights, staff would prefer the Ash and Clinkscapes site to be named as a park.

Devine commented that the he always referred to the site as the Old Fairgrounds, as it used to be the site of the county fair. Many refer to it as that historically.

Hood said he liked that idea, but was concerned about confusion with the current Fairgrounds. He suggested that the Commission submit any name ideas to Miller, with staff compiling a list of possible names for consideration by the Commission.

Pauls made a motion, seconded by Davis, that the Commission direct staff to contact the Shy family to clarify the issue of naming the Ash and Clinkscapes property, then compile a list of possible names for the Commission to consider, with Commission input. All in favor, motion passed.

MPRA Conference

Hood reminded the Commission of the upcoming MPRA Conference at Tan-Tar-A, and that registrations were due the next day (Jan 22) if anyone is interested. Blevins indicated he'd be interested in attending on Thursday, March 4.

Council Items

Hood informed the Commission of these Council actions:

Staff is presenting the proposed master plan of the **new regional park** to the Council at the Feb. 1 meeting. At that time, Council will likely refer the plan to the Commission for their review and recommendation. Hood would like for Council to see the plan at a March meeting, so if the Commission desires, they could tentatively set a public hearing for the Feb. 18 meeting to gather input. Hood said he believed the main point of contention with the plan will be the south end of the property, which many equestrian special interest groups would like to see made into a horseback riding area. Many environmental groups have expressed opposition to that idea. Staff has taken input on the issue and spent a lot of time researching and discussing it, and has come to the conclusion that they will recommend the area stay natural. Hood believes there will be some opposition to the proposed plan by equestrian groups.

Kloeppel asked if the public hearing would be at the ARC, if there would be enough space?

Hood said they would try to set aside two meeting rooms to accommodate the crowd.

Pauls made a motion, seconded by Davis, to set a public hearing for the Feb. 18 meeting, if directed to do so by Council at their Feb. 1 meeting. All in favor, motion passed.

Rock Quarry Park: Councilwoman Hoppe had requested a better lighted sign at the park entrance, which is difficult to see when turning from Grindstone Parkway. The parks staff had already been considering lighting at that location, so plans are in place to install the lighting.

American Legion Park: Council wanted to determine the interest of the Mavericks team in pursuing the site for new ballpark, before approving the renovation plans. There are no immediate plans by the Wendt family, in fact, they are planning a ballpark in Normal, Illinois. The Council has authorized the work at American Legion to begin in the spring.

Capital Projects

Griggs shared these updates:

MKT Bridge #13: bridge has been removed and work is moving quickly on the replacement.

MLK Battle Garden: seven benches have been replaced there. Devine asked if they were donated benches and Griggs answered yes, they are. The donor plates were removed from the old benches and reaffixed to the new ones.

PMC: Improvements are being made including new ceiling, lighting and windows.

Douglass: site preparations are being made for the new sprayground, which will be open through September, extending recreation opportunities for pool users.

Hickman HS: new boiler was installed.

Rock Quarry Park House: floors are being refinished.

LA Nickell Clubhouse: New floor installed in the ladies' restroom.

Philips Lake Park: new docks are complete.

Rock Quarry Park: full court basketball being installed.

Twin Lake winter dog park: has been very popular with no problems being reported.

Stephens Lake amphitheater: ongoing and set to open June 26.

Recreation Services Update

Coffman shared a video with the Commission that showed overall highlights of the entire Recreation Division for 2009. The video was created for the department's annual end-of-year staff meeting. Coffman said the goal is to use the video in presentations and promotions, in an effort to get word out on Parks and Recreation's value in the community.

The Commission complimented staff on the presentation.

Hood added that the department is selling t-shirts to the public to bolster the value campaign. Shirts were distributed to the Commission.

Donaldson said that if any group presentations are planned, she would be happy to speak on behalf of the department.

Hood thanked her and asked the Commission to let staff know if they knew of any speaking opportunities.

Commission Comments

Donaldson distributed some information regarding Master Naturalist training, and asked Commissioners to help spread the word.

Kloeppel asked staff if thefts at the ARC reported in November were still a problem?

Coffman said she was unaware of any additional incidents. Staff has considered installing video cameras in the parking lots, and will review the issue again. Staff at the ARC has worked diligently to educate the public on safety measures and continues to monitor the parking lots routinely.

Staff Comments

None

Public Comments

None

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.